

Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council
May 26, 2011, 10:00 – 2:30 | Edmonds City Hall

DRAFT Meeting Summary

Meeting Attendees

Recovery Council Members and Alternates

Elizabeth Babcock
Bill Blake
Alan Chapman
Scott Chitwood
Don Davidson
Rich Doenges
Bob Everitt
Robert Franklin
Hilary Franz
Joan McGilton
Angie Homola
Doug Osterman
Kathy Peters
Scott Powell
Sandra Romero
Barbara Rosenkotter
Dana Sarff
Gary Stoyka
Tim Walls
Jacques White
Jean White

Observers and Guests

Raymond Collmy
Margaret Duncan
Merle Hayes
Kathy Minsch
Lloyd Moody
Sarah Ogier

Staff

Ken Currens
John Meyer
Tristan Peter-Contesse
Rebecca Ponzio
Scott Redman
Morgan Schneider
Scott Williamson
Laura Blackmore
Sidney Brown

Representing

NOAA-NMFS
Stillaguamish Watershed
Lummi Natural Resources
Dungeness/Elwha Watershed
Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish
Thurston County
WDFW
Sauk-Suiattle Tribe
Washington Environmental Council
Green-Duwamish Watershed
Island County
WRIA 9 Forum
West Sound Watersheds
Snohomish Watershed
South Sound Watersheds
San Juan Watershed
Makah Tribe
Skagit County
Snohomish Watershed
Long Live the Kings
WRIA 8

Representing

Makah WQ
MidSound Fisheries Enhancement Group
Suquamish Tribe
Seattle Public Utilities
Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
King County

Representing

Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Puget Sound Partnership
Blackmore Consulting
Cascadia Consulting Group

Welcome and Review Meeting Summary

Acting Director Rebecca Ponzio welcomed Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Council (Council) members, guests, and staff and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Facilitator Laura Blackmore reviewed the agenda. The March 24 meeting summary was accepted with no changes.

Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) and Other Legislative Updates

John Meyer from the Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership) announced that the legislature has approved a capital budget. This budget maintains \$15 million for Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) and \$5 million for the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP). A handout with additional legislative updates was provided to Council members; this information can also be found in recent e-mails from Michael Grayum.

John thanked everyone who communicated with their legislators about the importance of funding PSAR and ESRP.

Projects of Regional Significance (PORS)

John Meyer provided an update on work related to Projects of Regional Significance (PORS). Since March 2011, a subgroup has convened and created a list of criteria for identifying PORS, incorporating feedback from the Council.

These criteria include the ability of projects to affect viable salmonid population (VSP) parameters. Ken Currens reviewed the four defining components of VSP:

1. **Abundance**
2. **Productivity**, defined as the growth rate of the population
3. **Spatial structure**, or population distribution
4. **Diversity**

Taken at the population level, these attributes are indicators of the health of a salmon population.

Watershed leads used the criteria defined by the subgroup to identify 29 projects that reflect significant hurdles and needs in their communities and, therefore, reflect capital projects essential to move regional salmon recovery forward. Of these 29 projects, 25 are on a three-year work plan and have undergone technical review.

The Recovery Implementation Technical Team (RITT) conducted an initial review of these projects to evaluate whether they are regionally significant, but this process was paused when questions beyond the watershed scope emerged. The definition of “regionally significant” was one question, and members of the RITT will be invited to discuss this definition at the next Council meeting.

Additional next steps include the following items:

- Council members should consider what information the RITT can provide that would help the Council consider regional issues.
- The subgroup will ask watershed leads whether any changes to the original list of 29 projects have arisen.
- The subgroup will reconvene to identify options for advancing this list and will present next steps at the July meeting.

Council members provided the following suggestions for consideration by the subgroup and the RITT:

- These are trans-jurisdictional projects, and we need to consider politics and science in parallel. Discussions between representatives from the subgroup and the RITT have acknowledged the importance of building political capacity and champions, as highlighted in a report written by Laura Blackmore. John assured the Council that the RITT increasingly considers political factors.
- The July Council meeting is a good opportunity to “demystify” the RITT and learn about its organizational structure. The Partnership intends to hold a structured discussion of “regional significance” and how to blend technical and political considerations at the July Council meeting.
- To better understand the barriers that keep projects from implementation, the subgroup should create a timeline to discuss each project and related politics. This timeline would support the creation of a list of

projects in advance of future budget discussions. Certain projects require action that can only be accomplished politically and do not require technical discussion.

- Regional criteria should be finalized before the subgroup follows up with watershed representatives.
- Programmatic pieces should be discussed independently of the projects.

Council members should anticipate discussing the definition of “regional significance” with members of the RITT at the July meeting.

Puget Sound Target-Setting

Scott Redman opened this portion of the meeting with a brief review of the Partnership Ecosystem Recovery target-setting process. The target-setting process began in 2007, when the Legislature required the Partnership to develop environmental indicators and benchmarks. In 2008, the Partnership compiled its first action agenda and adopted the term “targets” for measures of ecosystem recovery, though without having these targets in place. Over the next two years, the Partnership developed a dashboard of 20 indicators of ecosystem recovery. In December 2010, the Leadership Council, Ecosystem Coordination Board, and Science Panel agreed that developing ecosystem recovery targets to accompany the Dashboard Indicators is a high priority.

These ecosystem recovery targets are defined as “policy statements that reflect the region’s commitments to and expectations for recovery, or a measurable path to recovery, by 2020 based on scientific understandings of the ecosystem.” The Partnership expects to put these targets to use as soon as they are established, likely in June. It is important to note that the targets are primarily intended as communication tools, not management tools. The Partnership will set the best targets identified in 2011 and is committed to updating these targets as science evolves, acknowledging the tension between holding targets steady to measure performance and allowing them to change over time.

The purpose of the Council’s discussion is to provide input to the Leadership Council about the use of targets and the importance of salmon recovery to ecosystem recovery. The Council also seeks to provide recommendations on targets for three indicators strongly linked to the salmon recovery plan: **Chinook abundance**, **river mouth estuary restoration**, and **floodplains**, discussed further below. Council members highlighted indicators addressing low stream flow, funding, action agenda implementation, and land use/land cover as needing further attention.

To start the discussion around target-setting, Morgan Schneider led Council members through the draft letter from Partnership staff and its key points. Council members provided the following feedback on the Dashboard Indicators:

- The Leadership Council should clearly distinguish between targets that are intended as communication tools, management tools, or both. This distinction could be framed as a communication package of targets, an accountability package, and a management package.
- The Partnership should make the tone and language of the letter more reader-friendly, recognizing that it will be released to the public.
- Council members would like the opportunity to provide input later in this process to ensure targets are accurately set.
- The Leadership Council should be reminded that the salmon recovery plan outlines a series of targets that the Council is already working toward.
- The targets and measurements should consider external influences (e.g., climate change and ocean health).

Council members had until June 3 to suggest changes to this letter from the Partnership. This letter will be sent with the Partnership’s information packet on June 9.

Wild Chinook Salmon Abundance

In the document entitled *Options for Setting 2020 Recovery Targets for the Puget Sound Ecosystem*, the Leadership Council presents three options for the wild Chinook abundance indicator: no population change, a measurable population increase, or a population increase based on a linear forecast between today’s population

of wild Chinook and the 2050 target population. Morgan reminded Council members that these targets are for communication purposes, and different targets are used for management.

Council members discussed the definitions of “abundance” and “sustainable harvest.” The discussion noted the difficulty of defining “sustainable levels” of harvest, particularly with respect to the historic fish harvests experienced by tribes. The current definition of “sustainable harvest” is based on a mathematical model created by the National Marine Fisheries Service, in which there is a 95%-99% probability that Chinook could persist on their own for 100 years given a specified level of harvest.

Members of the Recovery Council recommended further explanation of the first option—**population maintenance**—and the reframing of this option into a more positive and aspirational communication tool. The Council had five suggestions for the Leadership Council related to the indicator for wild Chinook abundance:

1. This target should **focus on reversing the current trend of declining Chinook populations** and clearly communicate incremental progress toward salmon recovery to the public.
2. The Leadership Council should ask the RITT to recommend a target number of populations in which they should strive for a population increase, with the **goal of achieving a net increase in the Puget Sound Chinook population.**
3. It is important to show how abundance relates to watersheds. One way to achieve this is through a **focus on levels of productivity** in 2020, rather than abundance.
4. The Leadership Council should **establish intermediate goals and link these goals to actions.** Elected leaders often lack focus on longer-term goals, but they could use these intermediate measurable actions to emphasize areas where progress was made, specific shortcomings, and concrete next steps.
5. **The Leadership Council should use the salmon recovery plan’s VSP targets. Otherwise, the Leadership Council should rephrase this focus from “wild Chinook salmon abundance” to “wild Chinook salmon recovery.”**

The Council concluded this discussion by supporting Option 1, with amendments to include the five considerations listed above.

River Mouth Estuaries

Laura Blackmore began this discussion with a review of recommendations from the Partnership’s draft memo, which are based on discussions with the RITT and watershed leads. Council staff expressed their support for Option 3, presented in the River Mouth Estuary section of the *Options for Setting 2020 Recovery Targets for the Puget Sound Ecosystem*, with the following conditions and considerations:

- A restoration goal of achieving 80% of the historic extent of wetlands in 16 large river mouth estuaries (referred to as “restoration need”) may not be feasible, particularly in industrial and urban areas. Setting an unrealistic target may undermine credibility in many watersheds. Focusing on cumulative restoration targets in the Puget Sound region would address this concern.
- Wherever there is reference to Chinook salmon, the Leadership Council should add summer chum, steelhead, and bull trout, as these species also rely on estuaries.
- This target should include all Chinook natal rivers in the Puget Sound, namely the Samish, Quilcene, Deschutes, and Dosewallips estuaries.

The Council seeks increased communication with the public regarding the importance of estuaries.

Note that pocket estuaries are addressed in the shoreline armoring target, not the river mouth estuaries target. This distinction is due to the different restoration techniques used for river mouth estuaries and pocket estuaries.

Floodplains

Scott presented “Option 0,” a target that proposes the initiation or completion of restoration projects on 25% of degraded floodplain areas by 2020 with no loss of floodplain or connected floodplain area function in any Puget Sound watershed relative to the 2012 baseline. Council members supported this option, with the following modifications:

- This option should be amended to read “no loss of floodplain or connected floodplain area extent and function in any Puget Sound watershed relative to the 2012 baseline.”
- The Leadership Council should consider the definition of floodplain, which can be defined as the 100-year floodplain or defined to include the channel migration zone.

Council members are invited to attend the Leadership Council meeting, June 16-17 at the Seattle Aquarium, which will include a discussion of ecosystem recovery targets.

NOAA Implementation Status Assessment and Population Recovery Approach

Elizabeth Babcock updated Council members on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Implementation Status Assessment and the next steps related to the Population Recovery Approach (PRA). NOAA recently published the Implementation Status Assessment. The Partnership responded by sending a letter to NOAA and directors of state agencies, suggesting they engage the Council in a discussion. Elizabeth suggested having Gerry O’Keefe from the Partnership host the directors of state agencies at the next Council meeting to initiate a discussion of habitat protection. This meeting could help engage directors of state agencies and address protection at a regional scale.

Elizabeth emphasized that NOAA is in no way reducing its belief in and support for the RITT, though the agency no longer has the capacity to provide this group with logistical and administrative support. She hopes that the transition of the RITT from NOAA to the Partnership will create a tighter link between the RITT and the Council. The Partnership is discussing this transition at the federal Tribal caucus on June 6 to ensure close collaboration with federal agencies and tribes.

Elizabeth also reported that NOAA is finishing the 4(d) determination on the harvest management plan, which NOAA will publish soon. She thanked all the Council members who provided comments.

Council members expressed interest in discussing the PRA with NOAA representatives during the July 28 meeting.

Acting Director’s Report

Rebecca Ponzio is currently the Acting Director, and she reported that the director position announcement closed on Tuesday, May 24. Marc Daily is leading the search committee, which intends to select a new director this summer. Steve Tharinger, Dave Herrera, and Shirley Solomon of the Council are involved in the selection process.

Wrap up and Adjourn

Subsequent meetings will be as follows. All meetings begin at 10:00 a.m. at Edmonds City Hall unless otherwise specified:

- July 28
- September 22
- December 1